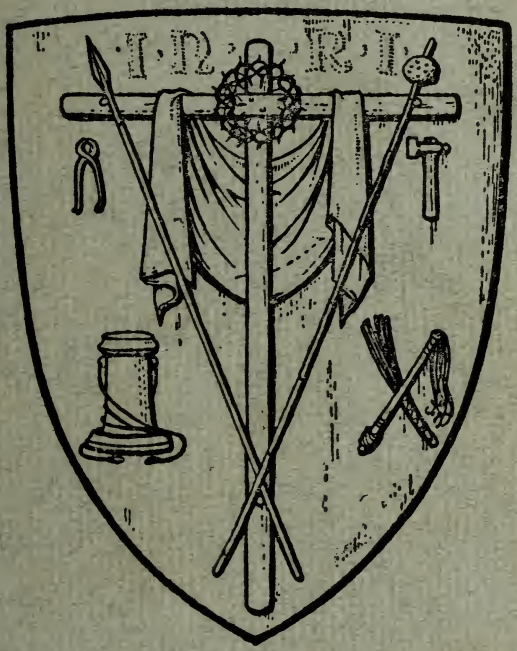
The Upper Room



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Quis est homo, qui non fleret ?

THE UPPER ROOM

A DRAMA OF CHRIST'S PASSION

BY

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

AUTHOR OF "A MYSTERY PLAY," "THE MAID OF ORLEANS"
"THE COST OF A CROWN," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Among the many varied gifts bestowed by God in such abundance upon Robert Hugh Benson was the power of setting forth in very simple words, but with deep intensity of feeling, the great mysteries of Religion. He used this gift some years ago to depict the coming of Our Divine Saviour into the world at Bethelehem, when he wrote the Mystery Play which has been rendered so effectively more than once by the children of the Westminster Cathedral Choir School. At the request of their headmaster he has now given them—and the gift has come quite unexpectedly as a legacy of love—the story, set in dramatic form, of the Passion of Our Master. Those who read it will realise with new vividness the meaning of those sad hours, every detail of which has been taught to us from childhood. And those who witness it portrayed in accordance with the author's spirit and his minute directions, will surely find in it pictures that will become the substance of many a sorrowful, penitent, and most

loving contemplation of the stupendous mystery of our Redemption. Those who read, and those who see, will alike think of him who in so short a time accomplished so much; who was taken from us so suddenly, and, from the human point of view, so prematurely; who has left so many to mourn his loss and feel his absence; and together they will pray that, if any evil still hide from him the Light on earth invisible, it may be speedily removed, and that his eyes may gaze with full contentment upon the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Whom by so many methods it was his joy, during his sojourn in this world, to make known to all who were privileged to listen to his words. May he rest in peace.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE.
Archbishop of Westminster.

November 1914.

PREFACE

The following drama is an attempt to present the story of the Passion in such a way as to be within the limitations of a small stage. The Scene, therefore, is the same throughout; the costumes and the properties and the staging generally are of the simplest character; and, for obvious reasons, the Figure of our Divine Lord does not appear at all. It is worth while, therefore, to add a few comments explanatory of the author's intentions, and of the conditions which he considers to be essential to a proper presentation of the Scenes.

(1) *The Scene* is the Upper Room throughout. This should be a box-scene, representing three plain interior walls. The walls may be crossed by flat beams, as in "magpie" architecture, with the spaces between white or lightly tinted; or they may be white throughout, or of woodwork, or of stone. There are two ordinary doors R. and L., two-thirds of the way to the back wall. This back wall has a very wide arch in it, with plain dark curtains hanging at either edge. Immediately outside this arch at the back rise two or three steps, on to a raised platform with a parapet, behind which is a concealed space of about three feet wide; and behind this hangs a cloth of dark blue-grey, on which is painted in dark green or brown the crown of a hill. The cloth, above the hills, is pierced by small holes; and in Act I., Act II. Scene 2, and Act III. a brilliant light must be placed behind the back-cloth: this gives an effect of stars. The moon in these same acts can be indicated by a

hidden light to the R. or L. between the arch and the back-cloth. Streaks of sunset and dawn can be effected by taking out small slashes in the sky just above the hill, and filling them in with dark red or yellow stuff. The passing of the spears and crosses in Acts I. and II. can best be managed by the three persons seated out of sight behind the parapet, who pass the spear-heads and tops of the crosses from hand to hand with the proper motions. Care must be taken that the accompanying sounds should not be too loud, as it is in the street below that the procession is supposed to pass. The moving of lights can be indicated by the waving of candles or electric torches out of sight. The furniture must be plain. The table should be long and narrow, on trestles. The stools absolutely plain: the chair behind dignified and simple, with a tall back and arms. The vessels and candlesticks must be plain: it does not matter of what age. The cloth should be edged with red or blue to suggest an altar-cloth. There is no reason to shrink from anachronisms; as the play is symbolical rather than realistic.

(2) *The costumes* should be of plain strong colours. Absolute white should be avoided; and all light tints of every kind. They should be made with very full folds. A useful form of head-dress can be managed by laying a cloth or handkerchief over the head, and confining it by a piece of string tied round the head, from the forehead, just behind the ears, down to the nape of the neck. This keeps all in place, and will not slip.

The "make-up" should be simple and strong. The women should be very pale, and darkened a little under the eyes. The men should be browned; especially St. Peter, Longinus, Judas, Achaz, and Samuel. St. John should be made up more like a woman; and St. Joseph of Arimathæa rather less brown than the other men.

(3) *The acting and speaking* should be slow and deliberate. When gestures are made, let them be full and spacious; and passion should be shown far more by intensity of voice than by either speed or shouting. Judas alone should be rapid and spasmodic.

(4) *The music* should be grave and soft throughout, except where otherwise indicated. Men's voices should largely predominate. Strings and a small organ would be the best accompaniment.

THE PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE DOCTOR.
ACHAZ (*the landlord of the Upper Room*).
SAMUEL (*his servant*).
JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA.
PETER.
JOHN.
JUDAS.
LONGINUS.
MARY.
MARY MAGDALENE.
VERONICA.
A Chorus of voices.

Note "R" and "L," throughout the stage directions, signify the Right and Left of the actor facing the audience, not of the spectators.

PROLOGUE

A bell strikes for silence three times. Then a Chorale, or a familiar modern hymn is sung—such as "O Come and Mourn." At the close of the last verse the curtains part and a DOCTOR *steps out. He wears a black cap down over his ears : and black flowing robes. He carries a black staff. He speaks slowly and deliberately.*

Sirs ; we are gathered at this holy time
To celebrate Christ's Passion ; by whose grace
Our sins are done away and we restored
From death to life. Here then, in simple show,
The tale of all those pains we strive to tell,
How in that Upper Room He gave Himself
To be our meat and drink : how Judas fell
And sold his Lord for money. Of that Lord
Seized in Gethsemane—haled here and there
To Caiphas, Herod, Pilate ; how the Prince
And Ruler of His Church denied his Lord :
How Magdalene wept : how Joseph had the Cup
Our Lord had drunk from : of that dolorous Way
That went from Pilate's hall to Calvary ;
Of the sun darkened and the rending earth.
But most of all of Mary—she who spake
So little, yet who agonised so much ;
Pondering all things in her heart, as when
She had Him on her knees in Nazareth.
For she it is who, Mother of her Son,
Is Mother of us all. It is through her

He came to us: through her we come to Him.
Look then on this—the Upper Room where He
Began His Passion. There from that Cenacle
Watch with the eyes of faith, as they once watched
Who heard the clamour of His going by
To judgement and to death. And when you go
Back to the world for which He died, take care
That all those sins which bound and tortured Him,
That broke His heart and pierced His Mother's, too,
Be by His Precious Blood all done away,
That you may meet Him, clean, on Easter Day.
[*He bows and retires backwards.*

B

Samuel· Sir! Save Him!

ACT I

"Pange Lingua" begins as soon as the DOCTOR *has retired; and at beginning of the second verse the curtain goes up, disclosing a plain room, with doors* R. *and* L.*: a wide arch at the back, leading to two steps up behind; beyond these is a parapet looking over a concealed street. Over the parapet is seen Calvary in the far distance against the sky, which is lit by stars and a moon with streaks of clouds below. Plain curtains hang on either side of the arch. A long table is across the stage, laid with white cloth; two candles burn on this table, near centre, with a silver cup between them and a silver plate beside it: earthen plates and mugs stand about, and loaves of bread. A tall chair is behind table, with open back, pushed clear: stools are behind the table, and one showing at each end; but that on* R. *is thrown down.* SAMUEL *is kneeling on upper step of parapet, with his hands clasped, looking over parapet* (R.) *listening. He is in a short white tunic, with legs bare to the knee, and arms bare to the elbows; he wears a plain bracelet on left arm: and sandals with straps to the knee. "Pange Lingua" continues till the* VOICE *ceases.*

VOICE (*gradually fainter till it dies away*).

I am the True Vine; and my Father is the husbandman.
Every branch in Me, that beareth not fruit, He will take away: . . .
And every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . .

Now you are clean; by reason of the word which I have spoken to you. . . .
Remain in Me; and I in you . . .
As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me . . .
I am the Vine; you the branches. . . .

[*"Pange Lingua" ceases softly.* SAMUEL *rises, impulsively.*

SAM.

Master! . . . He's gone.

[*He goes to parapet; stands watching* (R.): *turns suddenly and comes down, pensively, with clasped hands. Enter* (L.) ACHAZ. *He is in grey tunic to the knees, with a green mantle and sandals; with a full short brown beard. He carries a pitcher, which he sets on floor* (L.) *before table.*

ACHAZ.

Well, lad?

SAM.

The Master's gone;
Down to the garden with His friends; and I . . .
I, left alone!

[*He comes past* (R.) *side of table to front.*

ACHAZ.

Come, lad! What passed there, then?
What did He say? . . . Gone to Gethsemane?
Come, come, my lad!

[*He speaks uneasily, as if he tried to reassure himself.*

SAM.

Why, sir, I . . .
[*He looks as if on the point of tears.*

ACHAZ (*taking him genially by the shoulder*).

Come, my lad !
You marked them, did you not ?

SAM. (*crying, and suddenly throwing himself on his knees, and clasping* ACHAZ'S *arm*).

Sir ! save Him !

ACHAZ.

. . . Save !
Why ! What's this talk of saving ? Speak, I say !
[*He shakes him gently ; he looks sharply towards the street, and back again.*
Is there some peril, then, that threatens Him ?

SAM.

Sir ! I am frightened—frightened . . .

ACHAZ.

Nay ! stand up !
Stand up ! I tell you. [SAM. *stands.*] Now then ; what's this talk
Of saving ? What is it that frightens you ?

SAM.

Sir : the city's still : too still. The guards are still,
There up in the citadel. No man's abroad.
The moon is still : too still and white it shines
There above Golgotha. [*He points.*

ACHAZ.

What talk is this,
You fool? [*He looks round, terrified.*] Should not the Paschal moon be still!
What would you have it? [*He seizes him by the arm.*

SAM.

Sir; the very heavens
Are sick with fear; and all God's angels there
Move not for terror; and the Father's Face—
[*He covers his face with his hand; then makes gesture.*
I would the sun and moon and all the stars
Shook, rather, in their places—

ACHAZ (*savage with fear*).

Ah! then hold
Your peace!
[*He flings off* SAM.'s *arm; takes a couple of steps past him and comes back.* SAM., *meanwhile, runs back and up to parapet, where he cranes over, listening.*
Come back, my lad! Come back, my lad,
And tell me all that passed.
[*He waves to him.* SAM. *comes down by* L. *more self-controlled.*
Nay, quiet now!
What passed when I was gone?
[*He makes to pick up fallen chair as if to sit on it.*

SAM. (*alarmed*).

Sir; leave it there!
He flung it down; when out into the night
He ran—he, with the devil-driven face,
That bore the bag and paid you!

ACHAZ (*recoiling, dropping stool*).

What! you say
He ran into the night and left them?

SAM. (*whispering*).

Aye!
The man Iscariot! [*They stare at one another.*

ACHAZ (*recovering*).

Come! come, my lad!
Tell me what passed.
[*He draws out a stool from table, and sits.*

SAM (*recovering: after pause*).

Sir; when you left me here;
I did all as you bid: fetched up the wine:
Poured water; set the bread; brought up the lamb
And bitter herbs; then when the guests were set
Thirteen in all, I served them as you bade.
So when the Pasch was done, I went without,
Beyond the curtains, in the window-place.
And there I heard them . . . Sir— [*He is agitated.*

ACHAZ (*reassuringly*).

Nay, tell me!

SAM.

Sir;
I know not all that passed; but this I know
["*Pange Lingua*" *begins, closed lips.*
That when the Master spoke at length, the earth
Shivered to silence; while the harps of heaven
Sounded; and in the sound, voices of priests
Ten thousand, all together . . . and the air
Turned faint with incense.

ACHAZ (*uneasily*).

Come, my lad! you dreamed!
What said the Master? [*He leans forward to listen.*

SAM.

Sir; He took the Bread,
And broke it in His Hands the while He said,
"This is My Body which is given for you."
So then the wine; and said, "This is My Blood
Shed all for you." . . . And all the airs of heaven
Breathed as He spoke; the flowers of Paradise
Broke into blossom; and yet, mingled there,
The scents of blood and death, as if all lambs
That ever shed their blood to God—

ACHAZ.

Enough!
Enough, my lad! a dream! a dream, I tell you—

SAM.

Nay,
Sir, but I heard Him!—and it seemed to me
As if, when all was done, and all were fed
With What He gave them—

ACHAZ.

What! He gave them Bread
And Wine!

SAM.

He gave them what just now was Bread
And Wine—that which He blessed—

ACHAZ (*throwing himself back*).

Well! well!
["*Pange Lingua*" *ends.*

SAM.

And then
It seemed as if that silence fell which reigns
In earth and heaven—

ACHAZ (*interrupting*).

What of Iscariot?

SAM.

Why, sir, they spoke so low I scarcely heard
That which was said—But one cried, "Is it I?"
And then another, "Is it I?" And He,
The Master, said, "'Tis he to whom I give
The bread when I have dipped it." Presently
I heard a stool fall; and then he ran out
Into the night: and Night he was who ran.
[*He clasps his hands and shudders.*

ACHAZ.

And which way went he?

SAM.

Sir?

ACHAZ (*angrily*).

Which way, you fool?
[SAM. *comes up to him, looking round as if haunted: throws himself on his knees; takes him by shoulder and whispers.*

SAM.

Sir, he went up the street.

ACHAZ.

What! up the street!
Nay, down, you mean. Why, all the Temple guards
Keep close the upper end.

SAM.

Nay, up he went
And through them, with his bag.

ACHAZ.

Hark! what is that?

[*A low sound of voices is heard far to* L. *The two start up; and remain motionless, staring out through window: the voices grow louder: low shuffling footsteps. Lights begin to shine. Then, presently spear-heads and lights go beyond the parapet from* L. *to* R. *The two cling together. Then voices and steps die away: and all is silent.*

ACHAZ.

Run; run, boy! follow them; and come again
And tell me where they go.

[*Exit* SAM., *hastily* (R.). ACHAZ *goes up to parapet, hesitatingly: he leans over and stares* (R.). *A sound of voices rises again and dies.*

[*Enter* (R.) JOSEPH *of Arimathæa, with his cloak thrown round* MARY MAGDALENE. *He is in crimson silk tunic; purple mantle and crimson head-dress: he wears a sword on belt: bracelets on his arms. He has a full grey beard: he is very upright and resolute.* MARY MAGD. *is in a grey*

tunic with a black mantle, and a black head-dress: she is white and terrified. As they enter, he throws off the mantle he is covering her with: she stands, staring.

JOSEPH.

Nay, lady, then;
You're safe enough. (*Sees* ACHAZ). Why, Achaz, 'twas your house
She bade me bring her to.
[MARY MAGD. *looks earnestly round room.*
I found, just now,
This lady in the streets; I was but come
An hour ago from Caiphas—

MARY MAGD. (*throwing herself on her knees*).

Ah! the Cup
He drank from! (*She bows herself with her forehead to the ground; lifts herself a little and kisses the table-cloth*). And the blessed Board—Table of Grace!—
He sat at (*rises*)! Sir, you do not know my name.
You called me Lady. Would you so again
If you but knew my name? . . . Well—Achaz knows.

ACHAZ.

Why—

MARY MAGD. (*proudly*).

Nay: I'm not ashamed. He raised me up;
Up from the dunghill and the mire to set
Me with the princes and the penitents.
My name is Mary—Mary of Magdala!

JOSEPH.

Mary of Magdala! [*Recoiling.*

MARY MAGD.

Aye, of Magdala!
He found me, that Good Shepherd, 'mid the wolves
Within, without; devils and men; and He
Bound up my bitter wounds, and brought me home,
Rejoicing, on His shoulder—
[JOSEPH *bows and kisses her hand.*

ACHAZ.

Ah! and what
If that Good Shepherd now be smitten too,
And all His sheep be scattered!

MARY MAGD. (*terrified*).

What is that?

ACHAZ.

What are the guards gone by for?

JOSEPH (*soothingly*).

Nay, the guards
Are at the Council-hall. Two hours ago
The Council met, and still are sitting—

ACHAZ.

What!
And you were there!

JOSEPH.

Aye: and would not consent
To that their counsel. Yet I thought I'd best
Advise the Master of their black design
Against Him.

Enter Mary slowly.

MARY MAGD.

Black design! Why, what is this?
The Master's in Gethsemane with His friends—
In secret.

ACHAZ.

Well: the guards went by just now
With arms and torches, for I saw them go,
And sent my boy to follow them.

MARY MAGD.

Which way,
Then, went the guards?

ACHAZ.

Down to the lower gate
That leads to Kedron.

MARY MAGD. (*crying aloud*).

Ah!

JOSEPH.

Kedron, you say!
Why, that's the road He went!

ACHAZ.

Hark, who comes here?
I hear a step upon the outer stairs.

[*He goes to door* (R.) *and opens it. Then he falls back and bows. Enter* MARY, *slowly. She is in a very dark blue tunic over white, with heavy dark blue mantle over it, and a white head-dress. She is very still and dignified.* JOSEPH *bows;* MARY MAGD. *falls on her knees.* MARY

inclines her head ; and stands looking round the room. Then she passes across front of stage, and round by L. *end of table, round to side of chair. She stands there again. Then she lifts the chalice reverently, and kisses its foot : sets it down again ; places the small silver plate over it ; puts a napkin over all, and bows her head, still holding the sacred vessels, to* JOSEPH. JOSEPH *comes round* R. *end of table and kneels : she puts vessels into his hands. He holds them with his left hand close to his breast, and throws his mantle over them. Then he rises, and goes, walking backwards, to door* (R.), *and stands.* MARY *turns, goes up to steps, ascends them, and stands looking over* (R.). ACHAZ *starts forward from wall* (L.), *whither he has retired during this scene.*

ACHAZ (*in sharp whisper*).

What is she come for ?

MARY MAGD. (*moaning*).

Ah ! She comes to save
The Son she bore ! Mary !

[*She stretches out her hands.* MARY *turns her head : smiles : then turns back again and resumes watching. She is almost invisible to* R.

ACHAZ (*distracted*).

What is it all ?
Why is she come ? Why did she give the Cup
Into your keeping ? Where's my lad ?

[*He runs across to door* (R.). *As he reaches it, it is burst open, and* SAM. *enters, running.* MARY MAGD. *stands.*

The news!

The news, lad!

SAM. (*breathless*).

Ah! God save us! All is lost!
They took Him in the garden!

ACHAZ (*recoiling*).

Took him!

[MARY MAGD. *staggers back against table.* JOSEPH *moves a step forward.*

SAM.

Aye!
Laid hands on Him and bound Him. Bound the Hands
That nothing did but bless!

ACHAZ.

They bound His Hands!
Tell us! ah! tell us!

[*They do not notice* MARY, *who has turned and is listening.*

SAM.

Sir! I followed down,
Out through the gate behind them; crossed the stream
And up the hill. 'Twas Judas led the way.
I saw him! When they came to where the gate
Stood barred; one broke it down; and in they went;
Searching and shouting through the olive-trees.
And then I saw Him; and His Face was streaked

As if He sweated blood ; and round about
His friends stood all aghast. The flare of light
Was all blood-red upon them. And then he,
Of Kerioth, that led them there, went forth
And kissed his Master ! "Hail," he said, "All hail !"
Ah ! bitter kiss ! . . . "Friend," said the Master then,
—He called him "Friend" !—"Friend, whereto art
thou come ?
Betray'st thou with a kiss the Son of Man ?"
And then He said, "With swords and staves you come
To take me ! Whom d'ye seek ?" And all at once
They cried out, "Jesus ! Jesus of Nazareth !"
"Well, I am He," said He ; and at the word
The crowd went swaying back : and some fell down.
The rest ran at Him, shouting. Then one struck
A blow : I think 'twas Peter ; he of Galilee,
The fisherman : and struck young Malchus down,
Servant to Caiphas—him that kept the gate.
And when the Lord saw that, He bade His friend
Put up again his sword into its sheath.
"For they that take the sword," He said, "by sword
One day shall perish." Then He healed the man
And raised him up. And then they all ran in
And seized and bound Him.

ACHAZ.

And His friends !

SAM. (*passionately*).

His friends
Ran shrieking in the moonlight. Hounds, not men,
I think them ! And I cried aloud—cried shame
On such as seized Him ; but they laughed at me ;
And one threw stones . . . Hark ! Hark, they come
this way. [*He turns and sees* MARY.
Ah !

My people what have I done to thee?

[*They all stand aghast, suddenly terrified at seeing her. She turns her head; and at same moment far off sounds of voices and laughter and footsteps. "Vexilla Regis" begins softly.*

MARY MAGD. (*moaning with raised hands*).

Mary! Mary! Mother of my Lord!

[MARY *turns again with open arms.* MARY MAGD. *runs round table* (R.) *and up to steps and throws herself at* MARY'S *feet.* MARY *stoops; raises her; and turns again, with left arm round* MARY MAGD.'S *shoulder. Together they stand. The other three very softly, as voices grow louder, pass round to back of stage* (L.) *and stand looking. Glare of light, noises louder still. Spear-heads are seen to go by. As centre of procession comes beneath, and the two women turn,* MAGD. *suddenly stretches out her arms, crying,* Ah! *and sinks down sobbing.* MARY *stands motionless.* JOSEPH *bows his head over the vessels he carries.* ACHAZ *and* SAMUEL *fall on their knees. As noise begins to grow fainter, curtain comes slowly down, leaving* MARY *alone upright against the light. "Vexilla Regis" ends with fall of curtain.*

ACT II

SCENE I

A bell struck three times gives the signal for a Chorale to begin. This is timed so that in the last line the curtain rises slowly.

The Scene is the same as before; except that there are no stars, and streaks of dawn on the sky; and the candles are gone. When the curtain goes up, ACHAZ *is seated at* L. *end of table, elbow on table, chin in hand.* SAM. *is standing before table, facing him.*

ACHAZ (*heavily*).

Well, lad, what next?

SAM.

Sir, when I saw him crowned
My heart broke quite for sorrow. There He stood,
Pale with the scourging, white as a beaten flower
Spattered with blood. And then they flung on Him
A soldier's cloak, scarlet; and in His Hands,
Bound as they were, they thrust a broken reed,
And so— [*He breaks down.*

ACHAZ (*kindly*).

Come, come, lad!

SAM.

So they brought Him forth,
And Pilate went with Him to where the steps

Rise to the Judgement Seat. "Behold the Man!
Behold your King!" he cried, and smote his hand
On the Lord's shoulder. [*Breaks down again.*

ACHAZ.

There; there, lad!

SAM.

And all
The pack cried out—those hounds—"No King! No King
Of ours!" And at that Pilate laughed, and cried,
"What! shall I crucify your King?" And they,
"No King have we but Cæsar!" Pilate laughed
Again, and then grew grave. "Why, but," he said,
"I find no fault in Him. Come! Let Him go!
He's scourged enough." And then they all at once
Cried "Crucify"; and in the din and storm
I saw how Pilate called a lad who came
Bearing a bowl of water; and in this,
Angry, he dipped his hands, and flung the drops
Wide on the heads of those who shouted there.
"Innocent! Innocent!" he cried, "am I
Of innocent blood." And they with one accord
"His blood on us and on our children!" cried.

ACHAZ.

And then—

SAM.

And then I saw the crosses there,
Waiting without the gate; and at that sight
Could bear no more. (*Covers his face.*) And as I came away
His Mother met me: bade me say that she
Would be here, presently.

ACHAZ (*starting up*).

What, here!

SAM.

Aye. Hark!
I hear a footstep.

[*Runs to parapet, looks over; and comes down.*

Hush! she comes alone.

[ACHAZ *rises and stands waiting.* SAM. *goes to door* (R.) *and opens it. Enter* MARY, *as before; she inclines her head as they bow.* SAM. *kneels. She puts one hand on his head; and her lips move. Then she goes behind table and straight up the steps. There she kneels, against the parapet: and presently bows her head on her hands.* ACHAZ *suddenly covers his face with his hands; looks up, beckons* SAM. *to go out* (R.): *and himself goes out* (L.). *There follows a silence. Then very softly with closed lips is sung one verse of the "Stabat Mater." The last line suddenly drowned with clamour and steps on the stairs* (R.).

SAM (*off*).

Nay! Nay! you shall not!

JUDAS (*off*).

Aye! but I will; I say!

[*Door* (R.) *suddenly bursts open, and* JUDAS *enters. He is in a brown tunic, with no mantle; girded with a leather belt: he has auburn hair and full short beard:*

Judas: Thirty pieces lost and a soul lost with them.

no head-dress: he carries a rope across shoulders with a loose end hanging ready to his right hand; his hair is wild, and his face. He carries an empty leather bag, untied, in his right hand. He stops suddenly, as he sees table. He does not see MARY, *who remains still, face and hands hidden.* SAM. *stops, terrified, by door.*

JUDAS (*in whisper of terror*).

Aye! 'tis the very same; and here the stool
Lies to my foot! . . . 'Twas there He sat; and there
Sat John beside Him. . . . And here lies my stool . . .
And no man touches it! "His bishopric . . ."
How runs the psalm? "And let another take
His bishopric!" . . . Aha! And there He dipped
The bread in the bitter herbs; ah! bitter indeed! . . .
Here lad! . . . And what d'you think I've gained thereby?
Money, d'you think?

[*He lifts purse: then flings it down.*

There lies the empty purse—
And all the coin dashed in the Temple Courts
Before their faces. Thirty pieces lost
And a soul lost with them! Nay; a rope for me!
A rope for me! (*He lifts loose end and kisses it.*) Aye: and I kiss it too
With lips that kissed my Lord last night; and He—
"Friend," so He said; "Friend, whereto art thou come?"
Well, 'tis to this I'm come. (*Kisses it again*). My one friend left!

[*He turns to go.* SAM. *suddenly stops him with outstretched arms across the door.*

SAM.

No, Judas, no!

JUDAS.

What's this, you whelp?

SAM. (*crying aloud*).

No, no,
There's yet one friend, beyond that friend of yours
You've kissed to death. Ah! Judas! Had you seen
Her fling her arms round Magdalene; had you seen—

JUDAS.

What's this?

SAM. (*pointing to* MARY).

Why! see where now she kneels in pain
Beyond imagining; deaf to all sounds but those
Which tell His coming where she waits for Him.
Blind to all sights but that! Yet never deaf
Nor blind to those who cry her mercy—

JUDAS.

Ah!
What's this?

[MARY *lifts her head; looks; rises; turns.*

What's this?

[*He turns to struggle with* SAM.

SAM.

No, Judas! turn and see!

[MARY *extends hands.*

See how she lifts the hands that dandled Him,
Those hands that give the gift again to God
From Whom it came!

[JUDAS *stands petrified; shrinking back.*

JUDAS (*whispering*).

His Mother!

SAM.

Aye: the same
Who waits to pardon him her Son called Friend—

JUDAS (*sudden hissing whisper*).

Ah!

[*He turns; seizes* SAM. *and after very short struggle whirls him aside; tears open door: turns on threshold: stares at* MARY; *then dashes out* (R.). SAM. *recovers himself; runs to door, as it bangs. Then turns.*

SAM.

Ah! Mary, pray for him!

[*He falls on his knees: she has let her hands fall again as door shuts: she clasps them, turns again, and kneels at parapet, burying her face again. A short silence. Enter* ACHAZ (L.). *He does not see* MARY.

ACHAZ (*entering*).

My lad, go down
And keep the door awhile; the porter's off,
Gone with the rest.

SAM. (*rising*).

Sir—

ACHAZ.

Nay: be off and come
Back presently. [*Exit* SAM. (R.).

I never saw such crowds
At Paschal time; they'll beat the doors apart
If none be there to keep them—Why—Who's this?

[*He goes quickly across to* R. *and opens the door. Enter* MARY MAGD. *She is distraught.*

MARY MAGD.

Ah! save Him! Save Him!

ACHAZ.

Nay! now; sit awhile.

[*He supports her to stool on this side of the table; and, supporting her, gives her to drink.*

There! lady! there! What is it?

MARY MAGD.

Save Him, save!
I saw the Cross! The Cross and Nails and Crown!

[MARY *turns, rises; listens.*

I saw them!

ACHAZ.

There, there, lady!

MARY MAGD. (*gripping table behind her*).

Nay! I saw
The Cross laid on Him; and the title there
Borne by a lad before—"Jesus of Nazareth
King of the Jews!"—In Hebrew, Latin, Greek . . .
I heard them yell at Him! I saw the mud
Flung at Him till He fell. I saw Him scourged!
I saw Him silent as a lamb before
His shearers. And I heard how Pilate asked

M. Magd: Ah! Mountains fall on us!

"What then is truth?" when there the Truth stood bare
And bruised before him. I was there, I say!
I saw King Herod mock Him; and his men
Set Him at naught! I who kissed His Feet
And washed them with my tears. . . . I saw those Feet
Red with the blood that ran from Him! I saw—!
[*Rises: stretches hands.*
Ah! Mountains fall on us! Cover us, hills,
From Face of Judgement that comes swiftly on,
The Father's Face that sees the Son He gave
For our redemption, mocked and sent to death.

ACHAZ.

Nay, lady, nay—

MARY MAGD. (*fiercely*).

And you! you who are men?
What do you here, when innocent blood is shed,
And all the earth is dark? See how the sun
Rises in blood!
[*She turns and points to dawn: then sees* MARY: *and stops dead.*
Ah! ah! I did not know!
[MARY MAGD. *falls on her knees and hides her face against the table.* ACHAZ *starts upright.*

MARY MAGD.

Pardon! Forgive! I did not know. Forgive!
[*There is silence.* MARY *clasps her hands across breast, and lifts her face. Enter* R., *suddenly,* JOHN. *He is in a green tunic, with a white mantle over it: he has fair curly hair. He bows low to* MARY. *He is quiet and steady throughout.*

JOHN.

Lady ! [MARY MAGD. *looks up.*

ACHAZ (*on defensive*).

Who's this ?

JOHN (*quietly*).

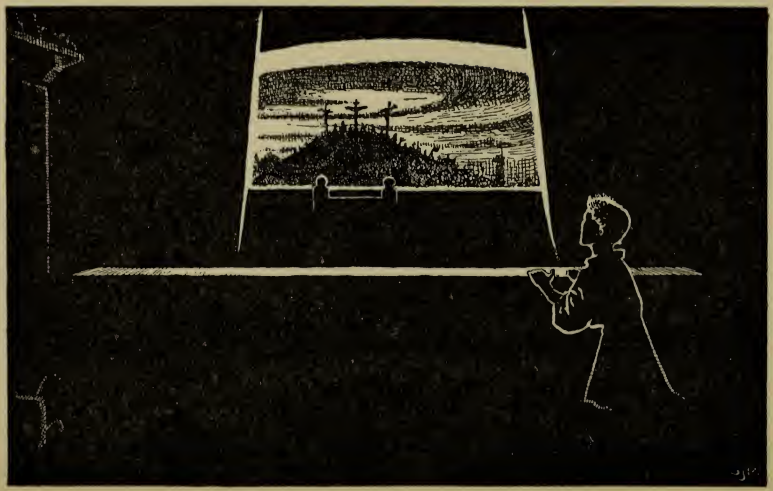
I am the Master's friend
Who sat by Him at supper. And I come
To bid my Lady out.

[ACHAZ *makes gesture for him to speak to her.*

Lady ! I come
From Pilate's Judgement Hall. Sentence is given
And all is finished. Pilate was within
When I came out. I saw the Cross prepared
And laid upon the shoulders of your Son.
He fell as He came out. I caught His eyes
As He rose up. They come this way ; the roads
Are full already, down to the City gate.
Mount Calvary is the place. Two thieves there are
To die with Him. They come the first, and then
Your Son comes after. Lady : if you will,
We must be gone. I have a little space
Cleared in the street below, where you can speak
With Him ; or at the least see Him go by.
Lady !

[*He bows. She has listened without moving. Then she comes down ;* MARY MAGD. *struggles forward to kiss her hand.* MARY *lays her hand on* MARY MAGD.'s *head.* ACHAZ *kneels.* JOHN *opens door* (R.). *As* MARY *comes towards it, she puts out her left hand and lays it on his shoulder. They pass out together* (R.).

[*"Vexilla Regis" is heard sung. And the noise of footsteps begins, and voices. Then,*



I have exalted thee with great strength: and thou hast hanged Me on the gibbet of the Cross.

very slowly, spear-heads begin to go by. Then one Cross; more spear-heads. MARY MAGD. *starts up as first Cross goes by:* ACHAZ *with her. She runs round table and up on to parapet. Enter* SAM. (R.). *He and* ACHAZ *go up behind* MARY MAGD. *and all stand watching. Second Cross goes by: more spear-heads. "Vexilla Regis" suddenly louder, till sung fortissimo: tramping keeps time. Then third Cross.* MARY MAGD. *falls on her knees at parapet.* ACHAZ *catches and supports her. Then Cross falls.* MARY MAGD. Ah!

[*Sounds of brutal laughter and steps: Cross rises again: sound of blows. Then it passes out of sight. "Vexilla Regis" begins to grow softer; and ceases as the curtain comes down.*

CURTAIN.

SCENE II

After a pause the "Reproaches" begin.

Curtain rises again. Candles extinguished: the table is stripped of its cloth, and stands quite bare. Stage perfectly dark. Crosses vivid against streaked sky. SAM. *kneels by table* (L.) *in agony. The "Reproaches" are sung slowly. Suddenly thunder begins: rolls up: louder and louder. Stage pitch dark for an instant. Flash of lightning: roar of thunder; and when it ends the "Reproaches" have abruptly stopped. The scene should occupy not less than six or seven minutes; and not more than ten.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III

Again a Chorale is sung. This stops at the end; and after a pause the "Stabat Mater" begins. The curtain rises at beginning of second verse.

Scene. All is as before. But table is covered again with white cloth; and the two candles are burning one at each end of table. The chair is raised on little platform. SAM. *is still kneeling by table, his face hidden, as if he slept. The sky is streaked with sunset, and the empty crosses are seen against it.*

[*Enter* ACHAZ. *He looks worn. He carries a bundle of white clothes and a rope. He throws them down.* SAM. *starts up.*

SAM.

Why, master!

ACHAZ.

Yes, my lad, 'tis done; and I
Wearied and sick to death.

[*He sinks down on stool to* R. *of table.*

SAM. (*looking strangely at him*).

My Lady comes?

ACHAZ.

Yes: presently. . . . Well, lad, what is it then?

SAM. (*going forward and kneeling suddenly by him*).

Master, I've prayed and wept and prayed again;
Till in dead weariness I swooned or slept;

Which 'twas I know not—yet indeed I know
That God has whispered to me—

ACHAZ (*leaning forward*).
Why, my lad,
You're all a-sweat and shaking!

SAM.
Ah, but no blood
I've sweated like my Lord!

ACHAZ (*conciliatory*).
Come, tell me then
What God has whispered to you.

SAM. (*earnestly*).
Sir: this day
Since sunrise—that strange sunrise after noon,
That swept the Night of Sin—that three hours' Night—
From off men's souls—I've striven to understand
Not why my Lord was slain, for that I think
I know; but why His Mother agonised
Beside Him; why she stood there by His Cross
Pierced with a sword as sharp as any nail—
Why, why she suffered so, whom God had made
So tender to all pain—

ACHAZ (*amazed*).
Why, lad!—

SAM.
And how
She bore so nobly that which tortured her—
A very Queen of men for gallantry.
[*Lifting his eyes.*

Sir, see you not that God designed her pain,
That she might be a Mother, by her pangs,
Of all Eve's children? Not her Son alone
Is born of her; but henceforth all that see
The light of earth, can claim the light of heaven
Through Mary's eyes that saw her only Son
Nailed to the Cross. 'Tis us she bore to-day
With tenfold Mother's pangs. . . . Did He not say
One word as there He hung—?

ACHAZ (*starting*).

Why, lad: He said
Indeed, to that disciple who was there,
"Behold thy Mother!"

SAM. (*rising suddenly*).

Did I not tell you so?
Did I not say— (*Stops, turns his eyes.*) Sir! what a heavy step
Comes up the stair!

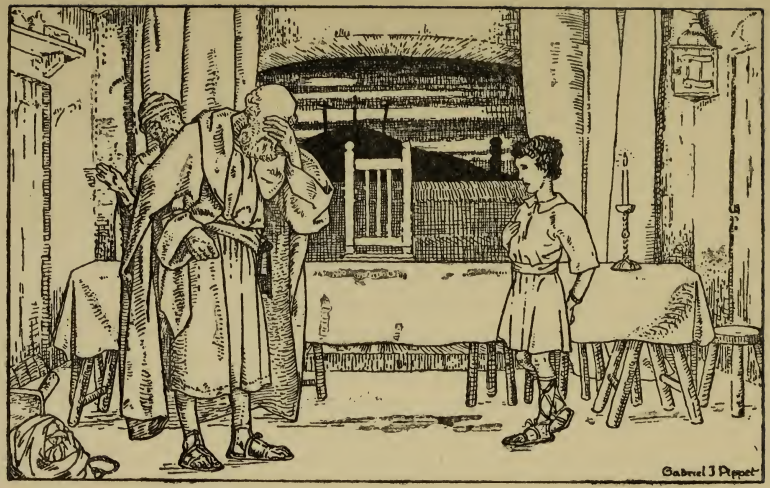
[ACHAZ *rises: both look to door* (R.).

Some man that surely bears
A cross not of God's making. [*He moves to door.*

ACHAZ (*preventing him*).

Hush! be still. . . .

[*Enter* (R.) PETER. *He is in a white tunic coming to below his knees, with a yellow mantle. He is bald, with a square white beard: and has two keys at his girdle. He has one hand half over his eyes. He stumbles forward, miserably, moaning: sinks down at centre of table: lifts the fringe of the cloth, and kisses it. He continues to kneel, turning a little to audience.*



Enter Peter..

PETER.

Ah! Lord! come back! Lord! But one word to me
To wipe away the sorrow of those Eyes
That looked on me—on me, who, once He said,
[*Gesture with both hands.*
Should be the very Rock—those Eyes that shone
There in the firelight, in the court: those Eyes
That looked on me, here in this very room,
As I cried in my madness, "Should I die
With Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

ACHAZ.

Sir!

PETER (*hearing nothing*).

Those Eyes
That ever sought mine! As a trusting friend
Looks on his friend, my Lord so looked on me.

ACHAZ.

Sir, what is this? [*He advances as if to lift him.*

PETER (*with fierce gesture*).

Stand back: stand back, I say— [*He rises.*
Coward and braggart; traitor and liar am I
That swore and ruffled—and when trial came
Forgot all save myself—denied my Friend,
Swore that I knew Him not! because a maid
Laughed at me; swore I knew Him not. Stand back,
Lest that you be defiled!

ACHAZ.

Sir!

PETER.

Nay, I say
I am not fit to mix with men.
[*Passes hand over his eyes.*
Those Eyes
Haunt and torment me. When I wake or sleep
They burn before me. Eyes all blood and tears
Lit by the fire that burned in the wide court
And burns in hell, I think.

ACHAZ.

Sir, but He said,
That if a brother sins and turns again
Even to seventy-times seven—

PETER (*fiercely*).

But how can I
Turn to the Lord I left?

SAM. (*suddenly*).

Then turn to her
The Mother of us all. Can she forget
Who bears a child, the pain that once she bore?
And for that pain's sake not forgive—

PETER (*amazed*).

Why, lad,
What Mother is there such as this?

SAM.

Why she
Who comes but now from laying her Son to rest
As once she laid Him in the manger.

Enter Mary, on the arm of John.....

PETER (*violently agitated*).

Boy,
You're mad! She comes, you say! Think you that I
Can bear to see His Eyes in hers—those Eyes
That scorch my soul with pain.

SAM. (*entreatingly*).

Sir.

PETER (*running quickly towards door*).

Let me go!

SAM. (*preventing him*).

Sir; listen. But last night there came a man;
Despair reigned in his face, as in your own.
He too came back to see the place where he
Betrayed his Master. At his girdle hung
No keys of promise, but a rope of death—
And Death Eternal. When she looked on him—

PETER.

Who?

SAM.

Why, the Mother of our Lord and us
Whom she has borne with pangs to-day—

PETER.

No more!

[*He dashes towards door, avoiding* ACHAZ *and* SAM. *As he reaches it, it opens: he recoils. Enter* MARY, *on the arm of* JOHN, *who supports her tenderly. She is deathly pale. Behind comes the* MAGD., *with bowed head, carrying vases. There*

is a moment of silence. Then MARY *lifts her eyes. Again a moment of silence. Then Peter throws himself on his knees.*

PETER.

Ah! Lady! Lady! By those Eyes of Love
That looked on you, while yet a little child
He lay within your arms! Ah! By those Eyes
That turned to you in dying! By those Eyes
You closed just now—have pity! Say one word
Of pardon in your Son's name—ere I go
And hide myself again. I—Peter—I—
Who dared not face the laughter of a maid
Entreat the pity of another Maid!
I—Peter—I—who left the Son in shame
Turn to the Mother—Lady—for Jesu's sake!

[*He throws himself flat. She releases* JOHN'S *arm; stoops, takes him by the arm: he rises to his knees, amazed, with raised hands. She lays one hand on his head: and then slowly kisses him on the forehead. He cries out,* Ah! *seizes her mantle, kisses its fringe. She passes on, on* JOHN'S *arm, round table to chair: seats herself, with* JOHN *behind: then lifts her head and looks at* JOHN *and then at door with slight gesture.* MAGD. *goes round to her other side and kneels, after placing vases on table.*

JOHN.

Peter: our Mother bids you keep the door
Until her Son comes back to ratify
That office. Let none enter, only those
That bear the Instruments—the Nails, the Spear,
And all things of His Passion—

PETER (*still kneeling*).

John !

JOHN.

I say
That is her wish. That he to whom our Lord
Gave once commission high to keep the door
Of heaven itself, should keep meanwhile on earth
This little realm of His.

[PETER *rises and goes to door.* JOHN *continues to* ACHAZ.

Sir ; from the Tomb
They come who bear the precious Instruments.
Our Mother begs your leave that they lie here
Until the morning.

ACHAZ.

Sir ; my house is hers

[MARY *bows to him.*

And all that dwell in it. [*To* SAM.] Boy, keep the door
That opens on the street.

[SAM *goes to door, bowing to* MARY. *As he reaches it,* PETER *opens it : and closes it after him.*

Sir : by your leave.

[*He takes from behind the table* (L.) *two napkins ; comes up, bows to* MARY, *spreads one napkin before her, and lays the other at her side. As he finishes,* PETER, *who has opened the door a little, turns to table.*

PETER.

Lady, he comes who laid our Lord to rest.
Is it your will— [MARY *bows.*

[*Enter* JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA *bearing the Cup, veiled. He bows at the door, goes*

up, places Cup on table before MARY: *genuflects and exit again, after bowing* (R.). MARY *takes covering off Cup: lifts it, kisses it; makes sign of cross with it: all bow heads: replaces it to her right.*

[*Re-enter* JOSEPH *with covered tray. He carries his head low. He brings it up to* MARY, *and places it on table. She lifts off the covering and stands up. Then she kneels, and all kneel with her. Then she alone stands, and lifts first the nails, turning them from side to side: then the crown of thorns. She kisses each, and replaces: and sits: the rest remain kneeling in places; except* PETER, *who turns to the door; and then back.*

PETER (*agitated*).

Lady, a soldier comes . . .
He bears with him a lance. He bids me say—

[MARY *starts: lifts her hand in gesture.* PETER *opens the door. Enter* LONGINUS. PETER *kneels.* JOHN *starts up.*

JOHN (*agitated*).

Captain—that lance—

LONGIN. (*standing by door*).

Lady, 'twas with this lance—

MAGD. (*crying out*).

Ah!

LONGIN.

With this lance I pierced the side of Him
Who was your Son—of Him who in the hour

Of death itself cried out so mightily ;
That I who heard Him—I, who many men
Have done to death, knew then that He who died
Was more than man. [*He bows his head and kisses lance.*
Thus I salute this lance
That brought forth Blood and Water from His side.

[*He brings lance forward. It is about five feet long. As he carries it those kneeling lift their hands, all except* MARY, *who stands motionless.* JOHN *sinks on his knees.* LONGIN. *presents the lance to* MARY, *who takes it, kisses it, and, with him, lays it on table before the candles.* LONGIN. *stands aside* (R.) : *bows : and is about to turn to go out, when* PETER *rises from his knees, opens door wide, and falls again on his knees. Enter* VERONICA, *with* SAM. *behind her.* SAM. *closes door and kneels.* VERONICA, *carrying the napkin, unfolds it, and shows it slowly from side to side. It is printed with three impressions of Christ's Face : the centre one being the clearest.* MARY *kneels, stretching out her hands.*

[*Then* VERONICA *advances slowly, still extending handkerchief, and comes up to* MARY, *who rises and takes it ; kisses it ; reverses it. All lift their hands, and then sink forward.*

[*Music on strings and voices begins.* "*Stabat Mater,*" *very softly, as Mary lifts the Vernacle. As she holds it she speaks, very quietly at first ; but her voice rises slightly, until last line.*

Sirs, see the image of my Son Himself
Whom once I bore in little Bethlehem.
See how your sins have marred Him ; see the tears ;

The wounds of thorn and blow. Behold and see
If there be any sorrow like to His,
You that pass by ! Weep for those sins ; and see
That by good penance and His Precious Blood
All shall be done away when forth He comes
To meet us all again on Easter Day ;
And we be comforted, my Son and I.

[*Her voice breaks in last line.*

[*The curtain comes down. Music continues louder. Then curtain rises again ; and a tableau is presented.* MARY *stands supporting a great cross, with her head bowed against it. The* MAGD. *is kneeling at its foot : her face hidden, as in pictures.* JOSEPH *stands half behind* MARY *as if to support her.* JOHN *is on other side from* MARY, *as in a Rood-group.* LONGIN. *kneels* (L.) *face towards cross, his head bowed.* PETER *stands* (R.) *looking towards cross, holding his keys.* ACHAZ *stands right forward* (L.), *and* SAM. *kneels beside him.* ACHAZ'S *hand is on* SAM.'S *head. The "Stabat Mater," which has continued during pause, begins at last verse but one as curtain goes up : and at last line of last verse curtain comes down again. The "Amen" is sung after fall of curtain.*

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